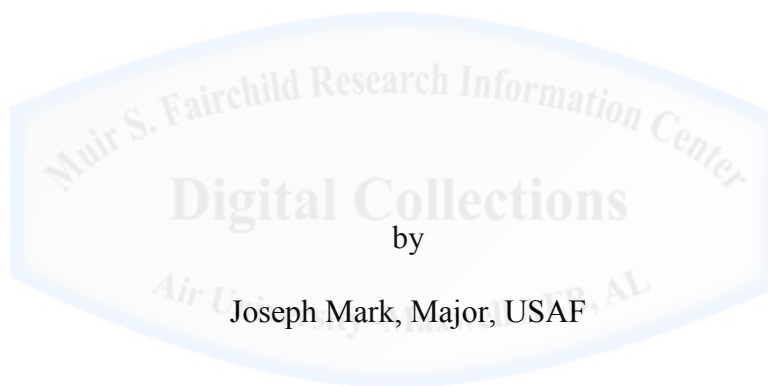


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AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
AIR UNIVERSITY

BOKO HARAM, REACHING THE NADIR



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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty
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INTRO

Since 2009, Boko Haram violence claimed the lives of nearly a thousand civilians and government personnel in northern Nigeria.¹ They illustrated their ability to target Western interests in 2011 when a suicide bomber detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria.² This group poses a threat to Nigerian stability and US strategic interests, especially amid fears of collaboration with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al Shabaab.³ Yet despite Congressman Patrick Meehan's recent attempt to persuade Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to add the group to the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list, she denied the request on the grounds that Boko Haram is a "loosely constructed" organization with a local focus.⁴ DoS did however, designate three of their senior leaders as "Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT)" under section 1(b) of Executive Order 13224.⁵ This positive step should empower the Nigerian government and bring about the demise of Boko Haram by curtailing regional expansion and drying up their support lifeline. Since Nigeria plays such a dominant role in the security of Africa, the United States cannot let them fail. In the event Boko Haram chooses a more dangerous path, the United States will be forced to commit more resources to ensure their destruction.

THE BIRTH OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

Boko Haram is an extremist Islamic sect that desires to create an Islamic caliphate in northern Nigeria ruled by Sharia Law. Their followers believe the Nigerian government is corrupt and an obstacle in the way of "pure" Islam. Their roots trace back to a group of radical Islamic youth who worshiped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri in 2002. This group subsequently moved to a village in northern Nigeria and established a separatist

community under Sharia Law led by Mohammed Ali. In December 2003, the group had an altercation with local police over fishing rights at a local pond. This altercation led to a shootout that left 70 members dead (including Ali), and a police siege of their local mosque. This incident gained international attention since the locals referred to this separatist group as the Nigerian Taliban.⁶

The few remaining survivors, including new leader Muhammad Yusuf returned to Maiduguri and re-united with childhood friends. After gaining some popular support, Yusuf established his own mosque in Maiduguri and started recruiting Nigerian youths and Chad refugees by offering food and shelter. As his sphere of influence expanded, Yusuf created a small self-sufficient organization that became known as Boko Haram, which translates to “Western Education is Sinful.” His organization included cabinet positions, religious police and a large farm. Though the goal of their movement was already well established, the transformation from separatist group to terrorist group occurred during the 2007 presidential elections. Yusuf ordered the assassination of cleric Sheikh Ja’afar Mahmoud Adam while he was praying at the Ndimi Mosque where he preached. Prior to his death, Sheikh Adam was openly critical of Boko Haram’s radical Islamic beliefs. This assassination also made it difficult for Boko Haram if they ever desire to return to mainstream society and moderate Islam.⁷

Yusuf led Boko Haram until 2009 when he was captured and killed by Nigerian security forces. This government crackdown came amid increasing reports that Boko Haram members were militarized and heavily armed. After the fighting, it was said that over 700 people died, including police officers who died by way of Boko Haram poison-tipped arrows and fuel-laden motorcycles.⁸ The emergent leader of the group was Abubakar Shekau, who was believed to have died in the 2009 crackdown.

THE LEADERSHIP CoG AND SLAVE LABOR

Shekau is the present day leader of Boko Haram and has not been seen in public since 2009. Reports suggest Shekau sought refuge in neighboring Ngaoundere, Cameroon (approximately 400 miles from Maiduguri, Nigeria).⁹ Nigerian officials believe he only communicates directly with his commanders, but follows a doctrine of minimal contact. Despite operating from the underground, one thing is certain, violence under Shekau's leadership has increased exponentially and his enthusiasm for killing (as stated in a videotaped appearance) further destabilized northern Nigeria and is a concern to the United States and its allies.¹⁰ Unlike the founder leader Yusuf, Shekau is not as highly educated, speaks Hausa fluently, and knows limited Arabic. He is however, well grounded in religion and is able to unite the group upon that regard.

Shekau has multiple commanders in the northern states, most of which have post-high school education. Some ironically, are even educated via Western universities or have advanced degrees.¹¹ These commanders are responsible for organizing, training and equipping the foot soldiers for mission execution. The top two commanders beneath Shekau are Abubakar Adam Kambar and Khalid al-Barnawiare. This leadership has direct relationships with AQIM and Al-Shabaab and was identified by the DoS as the center of gravity (CoG) for the organization. As a result, the US DoS added these leaders to the SDGT list in June 2012.¹²

Though the leadership may be the strategic CoG, the foot soldiers are the work horse of the organization. This lower echelon demographic consists almost entirely of poverty stricken northern Nigerian males and refugees from surrounding countries between the ages of 15-25. Most of them have no formal education, are orphans, and are the outcasts of their society.

Nigerians use the term “Almajiri” to describe these people that have no home and often sleep in abandoned cars or outside.¹³ Because they live in states governed by Sharia Law, the Qur’an is forced on them, and they are subject to a radical interpretation of Islam by elders in madrassas. These elders would often give them empty bowls for the purpose of having them beg for food on the streets. Joint Task Force (JTF) interrogations revealed that a majority of these foot soldiers were ignorant as to the reason why the mission was carried out or who sent them.¹⁴ They were simply working for food, the very foundation of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. From this example, one can see how easy it is to compel this demographic to commit violent acts in the name of (radical) Islam by rewarding them with simple sustenance. This problem is made worse by a growing poor population due to the Muslim view on birth control. Though the Qur’an does not explicitly forbid birth control, it contains statements encouraging procreation. The Prophet Muhammad also allegedly encouraged marriage and procreation.¹⁵ It is common for women living in northern Nigeria to have greater than five children. There was even a recent case in Katsina State where a woman gave birth to her twelfth child.¹⁶ Considering the per capita income in Nigeria is \$290 per year, feeding the family is a daunting task.¹⁷ As a result, wealthier Muslims enjoy un-questioned influence even if they are Islamic extremists.

Some of the foot soldiers are refugees from border countries like Chad or Niger. Much like the European Union states, Nigeria’s borders are extremely porous and one can easily travel across to bordering countries without being stopped. The border with Niger is further complicated because one can just drive across the desert and bypass the roads altogether. Crossing Lake Chad by boat gives un-interrupted access to Nigeria and also avoids the road system.¹⁸ These loose borders also contribute to arms trafficking and black market trade which enables terrorism.

ACTS OF TERROR

During Shekau's reign as leader, the frequency and magnitude of attacks increased. Boko Haram rarely waits longer than one or two months before executing attacks. This is an incredible feat since command and control is executed with minimum communication using underground channels. In 2010, most of the attacks focused on the civilian Christian population, churches, and police forces. Christians represent a Western religion and do not assimilate well in the Muslim dominated northern states. Boko Haram militants used mostly small arms and basic explosives which yielded lower death tolls. On May 12, 2011 the group exhibited a shift in tactics and target when they kidnapped a British and Italian engineer from their residence in northern Nigeria. These hostages were later killed on March 8, 2012 during a failed British rescue attempt. Just two months after the kidnapping, they detonated a VBIED in the parking lot of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) headquarters building in Abuja. This result was one dead police officer, civilian, and damage to surrounding buildings and over 50 vehicles. This attack illustrated the group's increased knowledge in advanced weaponry and yielded greater damage than previous attacks.¹⁹

The attack that brought Boko Haram to the international stage occurred on August 26, 2011 when one of their suicide bombers rammed two exit gates at the UN compound in Abuja. The bomber then crashed his vehicle into a building lobby where he detonated the VBIED. This attack highlighted their ability to execute complex attacks against Western targets and subsequently left 24 people dead and 115 injured.²⁰ Though the motive for the attack was not explicitly verbalized, it can be assumed that the UN contingent in Nigeria represented the evils of Western education, which Boko Haram seeks to eradicate. Additionally one can surmise that by flexing their muscles against a defended global target, they gained notoriety and called

worldwide attention to their cause. This could help in recruiting people that were sympathetic to their cause. In 2012, high-magnitude attacks continued on a rate of one every two months, executed mostly by suicide bombers. Their targets were mostly Christian churches and church goers, as well as Nigerian Army headquarters in Kaduna state. Recently, Nigerian police discovered 130 bodies found in the Plateau state.²¹ The big takeaway from their violence in 2012 is that it spanned almost all northeastern Nigerian states, which indicates their affected region is growing.

A more disturbing aspect of their violent attacks is their use of suicide bombing or the human IED. To this day, there were approximately ten confirmed cases of Boko Haram suicide bombings. This is extremely difficult to predict and defend against, and has proven mass effects. The group does not wear uniforms, blends in with most of society and varies the age and sex of the “delivery vehicle.” A recent bombing attempt at Nigerian police headquarters was foiled by a police guard. The payload was a box filled with explosives intended to detonate at the front of the headquarters building. The delivery vehicle was a seven year old boy. As the police guard stopped the boy at a checkpoint, another Boko Haram soldier detonated the explosive charge remotely.²² Since the first suicide bomb detonated in June 2011 at the police headquarters building in Abuja, officials tried to rationalize the act as an issue of “mistiming” since the bomb did not physically detonate close enough to its alleged target. They claimed the assailant left the bomb in the wrong place and it detonated. In actuality, the suicide bomber detonated a VBIED in an attempt to kill Inspector-General of Police Hafiz Ringim, whose convoy he followed to the compound. It was difficult for the NPF to admit this was their mistake for not realizing (or anticipating) what was happening at the time, since that would hurt their credibility and popular support. They eventually acknowledged these suicide attacks, though it remains one of their

biggest challenges today since Boko Haram uses males and females of different ages to carry out attacks.²³

MARGINAL PROGRESS AT BEST

The Nigerian government, under President Goodluck Jonathan (a Christian, and leader of People's Democratic Party of Nigeria-PDP), took some strides in countering the terrorism threat. On June 3, 2011, President Jonathan signed the Terrorism Prevention Act which established counterterrorism guidelines for Nigeria using international norms and UN guidelines as a foundation. He also became a member of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIAMBA) which is a regional task force designed to restrict monetary assets for terrorist organizations. The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) also assisted Nigerian law enforcement official with training. Despite these efforts, the Nigerian government failed to progress enough to counter the terrorism threat. In fact, GIAMBA stated that in 2011, Nigeria's inability to prosecute terrorist financial crimes relative to their action plan was unsatisfactory.²⁴ The only success the Nigerian government had was at the tactical level, where they managed to arrest, and sentence a few higher level Boko Haram members including one of their spokesmen. They also managed to kill several lower level Boko Haram members. These efforts are supported by an estimated \$647 million in US generic foreign aid in 2011.

The tactical manner which the Nigerian government goes about countering this group is primarily through extrajudicial execution. Their tactics were referred to as "brutal and counterproductive."²⁵ Human Rights Watch reported cases of police killing members (and implicated non-members) just because they could not acquire their release fee. Police continue to

violate people's privacy with their near-daily police raids, often mistreating them in the process. For a local population that sustains itself at the poverty level, this rallied more sympathy for Boko Haram than for the government. This type of ruthless behavior from law enforcement lends credibility to Boko Haram's claim that the government and law enforcement is corrupt. This is the exact thing Boko Haram is fighting against in the region.²⁶

The ability to provoke this type of government overreaction is the principal strategic success of the group and is likely to sustain them until law enforcement figures out a new counterterrorism approach. The group also shows a consistent ability to recruit Nigerian youth and neighborhood country sympathizers.²⁷ Though law enforcement seems to kill several Boko Haram foot soldiers during every crackdown, there seems to be no shortage of them. In fact, the numerous suicide bombings illustrate the ability of leadership to persuade some to shed their own blood in the name of the cause. Their tactical successes include over twelve Christian churches bombed, nearly a thousand dead Christians and law enforcement, and the prestige of targeting a symbol of Western leadership (the UN).

THE REAL PROBLEM

When analyzing Boko Haram's motives and actions, it's easy to focus on the superficiality of the "terrorism" problem. When reading reports on their violent acts against Christians, law enforcement and government officials, one can easily be persuaded that this group follows a pattern of Middle East non-state terror organizations motivated by religion. Their acts cannot be taken as isolated events, and one must connect the dots to reveal the reality of the situation. This group is being used by northern state officials as an instrument of power to help seize control from the current federal government.

A series of attacks against a Christian church and its members in October 2012 provides insight to the complexity of this problem, and illustrates political corruption at its finest. These attacks claimed 31 casualties and caused hundreds of people to flee the city of Potiskum, Yobe State.²⁸ The JTF subsequently conducted a series of raids that led to the capture of Boko Haram Commander Shuaibu Mohammed Bama. He was captured in the house of Borno State Senator Alh. Ahmed Zanna (PDP). Senator Zanna acknowledged that Bama was his nephew, but claimed he disowned that house. He claimed the house now belonged to his political rival, former Senator Ali Modu Sheriff in an attempt to transfer blame. The Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) discovered during interrogation Senator Zanna had given Boko Haram N1.5 million (approximately \$9,500 USD).²⁹ In January 2012, the SSS discovered former Kano State Governor Malam Ibrahim Shekarau (All Nigerian People's Party-ANPP) contributed N10 million (approximately \$63,700) monthly to Boko Haram. Former Bauchi State Governor Isa Yuguda (PDP) allegedly paid N10 million per month for "protection" and provided "training ground in the back woods."³⁰

Are these politicians truly paying for "protection" like New York City business owners did to the American Mafia in the mid-1900s? If so, they may be untouchable themselves, but the attacks are occurring on the land they govern and to the people they serve. To make matters worse, since the northern states are Muslim majority (twelve observe Sharia Law), they are reluctant to take action to defeat the Muslim group Boko Haram. Politicians are extremely worried about losing the Muslim vote, their power, and way of life.

The political corruption is not isolated to the opposition party either (ANPP), as one might expect. This is because the Nigerian political system operates on a rotational basis between north and south. Though PDP and ANPP have the most following, there is no

comparison between them and American Democratic and Republican parties in terms of their role within the political system. The political controversy arose when President Jonathan assumed office after President Umaru Yar'Adua's early death on 5 May 2010. This event spawned opposition from the northern states since their "leadership" rotation was next in queue. If President Jonathan had just served out that remaining term, northern opposition may have dissipated, but he decided to run for re-election in 2011. He won 59 percent of the vote, but in doing so, deprived the northern states of their chance to lead thereby upsetting the balance of power in Nigeria. His victory also created a cause for violence in the mind of extremists.³¹

Boko Haram, supported by northern state government financing, is in a protracted war with the NPF which they see as President Jonathan's governmental arm in northern Nigeria. Group leader Shekau has not concealed his wish to bring down President Jonathan's government, which is evident by numerous online posts to *YouTube*. In fact, in April 2012 Shekau stated in a 14 minute *YouTube* video, "We will devour you in the three months."³² This came in response to a speech President Jonathan made in South Korea stating the Boko Haram "phenomenon" would be under control by mid-2012 (this speech was made before Boko Haram leaders were added to the US SDGT list).³³ It is also important to note President Jonathan referred to the group as a "phenomenon" versus a terror organization. Much like the United States did by not adding the entire group to the FTO list, President Jonathan attempted to minimize their reputation globally by not giving them notoriety.

MOST LIKELY COURSE OF ACTION (MLCOA)

The increased partnership between the United States and Nigeria will significantly weaken Boko Haram over the next couple years. Identifying and targeting the leadership will

limit their ability to expand regionally and globally. As a result, Boko Haram will continue to maintain status quo pursuing a limited local objective in northern Nigeria. While there may be a periodic surge in their attacks, they should taper off as group leaders are gradually cut off from their political funding streams and eventually captured or killed. When funding is constrained, commanders should no longer be able to provide consistent meals or shelter for their foot soldiers. When this occurs, group leaders will lose their influence in the region and will have a difficult time recruiting since foot soldiers will have to find an alternate means of survival.

By adding Shekau, Kambar and Al-Barnawiare to the US DoS SDGT list, the United States can pool intelligence with Nigeria and other nations in attempt to build a more accurate case file for counter-terrorism strategy. Any individual or group sending funds or material support to those three leaders will come under scrutiny, their assets frozen, and arrests made when appropriate. Lower echelon commanders such as Bama are not cut off from their funding streams (since the group itself is not on the FTO list) and state politicians can still contribute. That money, however, will be tougher to get in the hands of the decision makers. This was a smart strategic move by US and Nigerian officials. The difficult aspect of this endeavor is Nigeria is a cash-based society, so any internal cash funding will need to be intercepted before reaching the leaders. With increased awareness and incentives, this is certainly within the realm of possible.

Now that Boko Haram leadership is on the US DoS SDGT list, AQIM and Al-Shabaab will have to think twice before receiving money from them. While those groups can control their own actions and take precautionary measures to avoid the spotlight, they cannot control what Boko Haram leaders do to avoid the same spotlight. This fear of attracting attention should act as a deterrent, and potentially construct a barrier for interaction. If Boko Haram leaders are

operating from outside Nigeria, such as Cameroon, now they will face pressure from external governments and citizens.

Another benefit is the United States and Nigeria increase pressure on Boko Haram and partner groups AQIM and Al-Shabaab, while not impacting humanitarian assistance in the region. By focusing efforts on the masterminds versus the blind followers, the same end state can be achieved without affecting remittances from Nigerian-Americans. This strategy should prevent northern Nigeria from total humanitarian calamity, which has the potential to spread regionally.

Scholars argue that the list process created a “cumbersome and arduous process” that has interfered with humanitarian assistance in Africa.³⁴ For instance, The Charity and Security Network (CSN) issued a report titled *Deadly Combination: Disaster Conflict and the U.S. Material Support Law*, detailing how the Patriot Act prevented assistance from reaching hungry citizens in east Africa during a recent famine.³⁵ Since group designation prevents material support to anyone associated with the group, the interagency must prove their assistance will not help members. This research is time consuming and difficult to prove in areas such as northern Nigeria where foot soldiers are indistinguishable from the local population. By focusing efforts on leadership versus the group as a whole, much needed humanitarian assistance can continue (from the United States and internationally) which should limit the amount of people having to turn to Boko Haram leaders for sustenance.

This strategy also allows remittance payments from Nigerian-Americans to continue to reach their home and families in Nigeria. According to the World Bank, Nigeria is the top remittance recipient in Africa. In 2011, it received an estimated \$10.6 billion which accounted

for 4.5 percent of their GDP.³⁶ For Nigeria, this money travels from the individual to their bank in the United States, then to money transfer companies such as Western Union or Money Gram where it is distributed to their families in Nigeria. If the group were added to the list, many Nigerian-Americans would fear prosecution for sending money home and would be forced to cut their lifeline. This would not only have a devastating effect to the people of northern Nigeria, but Nigerian-Americans would also harbor discontent for the United States and potentially become sympathetic to Boko Haram. Targeted efforts against Boko Haram leaders allow these payments to continue and prevent humanitarian crisis from occurring.

In addition to the financial constraints and increased global awareness, imposed travel restrictions will prevent these Boko Haram leaders from entering the United States and other nations. This will limit their ability to seek outside counsel, and prevent them from achieving global reach. As a result, their operations should stay local for fear of being arrested. This strategy also allows foot soldiers to find an alternative to membership such as seeking employment in other countries. For the United States, it is also much easier to focus on identifying three specific individuals than a larger insignificant following, especially when they blend in well with African American citizens within the United States.

MOST DANGEROUS COURSE OF ACTION (MDCOA)

The increased pressure on Boko Haram leadership and northern state politicians could completely dry up financing for the group. If this occurs, Shekau and his top commanders may look to AQIM and Al-Shabaab to finance their mission. It is possible that if Boko Haram is brought under the AQIM or Al-Shabaab umbrella, their leadership will want to see a return on the investment. This has the potential to develop into an attack on the United States homeland or

US strategic interests in Africa. This would force the United States to commit further resources and personnel (including military) to the region in order to combat the threat.

In addition to financing, AQIM and Al-Shabaab offers Boko Haram training, resources, notoriety, and sanctuaries outside Nigeria where they can plan unimpeded. They also offer a supply of young Muslim foot soldiers to carry out attacks, which will be important if Boko Haram loses the support of the local population in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram is already familiar with the training and resources provided by these groups. This allowed the group to progress from using poison tipped arrows and assault rifles on their initial attacks, to more complex IED's, and now remotely detonated IED's. AQIM has mobile training camps set up in the Sahel region of Africa which Boko Haram can use to better train their soldiers and plan their efforts.³⁷ The overall impact would be a stronger, more effective Boko Haram able to bypass local support and still execute the mission.

This merger is attractive to AQIM and Al-Shabaab for a few reasons. First, Nigeria's southern coast offers a port of entry for arms shipments. Second, since Nigeria is involved in several coalitions within Africa, it has unprecedented access to the continent, including US strategic interests. Lastly, it gives these groups a better opportunity to assert global objectives to attract worldwide notoriety for their cause.

In an October 2012 interview with Vanguard, Boko Haram Spokesman Captain Mark Anthony said a top government official in the Delta region used his political influence to bypass Nigerian customs laws. As a result, illegal arms dealers proliferated military equipment to Boko Haram.³⁸ That same month, Nigerian authorities arrested 15 Russian sailors in the port of Lagos, and confiscated 8,598 rounds of ammunition and assorted rifles after seizing their ship.³⁹ While

this particular investigation is still ongoing, it highlights the vulnerability of the Lagos ports to black market shipments. Though the JTF has an increased presence in these coastal ports, not all of these shipments get intercepted. Additionally, unless the Nigerian Federal Government enforces corruption laws with harsh penalties, this type of behavior is likely to continue in the future.

If these groups recruit members or find sympathizers in the Nigerian Armed Forces, their regional impact can greatly expand. Nigerian Armed Forces are involved in numerous coalitions which commit their forces abroad. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) are two of the most active. Between these two coalitions alone, Nigerian forces deployed to former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan. AQIM and Al-Shabaab could use this to their advantage a few ways. They can use their trusted agents in the armed forces to communicate with cells located in other African countries. Because of their military status, these agents may also have access to sensitive areas such as oil and gas infrastructure, UN facilities, and US or NATO personnel operating in African countries. This unprecedented access can be used to directly attack these assets or to gather intelligence on vulnerabilities and patterns of life to facilitate an attack in the future.

If the group merger intends on asserting global reach, Boko Haram can offer up their human resources. Most American and European citizens associate terrorism with the Middle East and people of Arab descent. As the infamous “Underwear Bomber” Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab proved in December 2009, terrorists can be of any ethnicity. Abdulmutallab was a clean-cut, well-educated Nigerian citizen in his mid-twenties who possessed a mechanical engineering degree and had some post-graduate business education. Trained and equipped by Al Qaeda in the

Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), he attempted to detonate explosives on Northwest Airlines Flight 253 en route from Amsterdam to Detroit.⁴⁰ Though the results of racial profiling at security checkpoints is controversial, this incident highlighted one of its major limitations. Educating the general population to maintain awareness on the African demographic is a difficult sell since it evokes a plethora of feelings regarding the civil rights movement and racism of the 1950s and 1960s. Since this has the potential to create fear within a Western society, it remains vulnerable. This vulnerability increases the likelihood of a successful attack on Western soil.

Should this MDCOA come to fruition, the United States would be forced to commit further personnel and resources to the region to reduce the effectiveness of this unified terrorist group. The monetary commitment would put further strain on the US economy for marginal gains and is sure to anger the American public. Additionally, committing additional political and military assets to the region would spread an already thin force even thinner and does not align with the recent shift in focus to the Asia-Pacific region.

IMPACT ON US STRATEGIC INTERESTS

The most obvious concern is the threat to US strategic oil interests in the Nigerian Delta region. As of July 2011, Nigeria was Africa's largest oil supplier and the fifth largest global oil supplier to the United States. African oil exports to the United States were approximately equal to exports from the Middle East.⁴¹ Though Boko Haram has not threatened or carried out attacks south of Abuja, JTF officials believe this could just be a matter of leadership. These officials suggest if a strong leader takes over for Shekau, this could change relatively quickly.⁴² As the region's largest oil supplier, an attack on oil infrastructure in the Delta region would have significant impact on the Nigerian and regional economy. It would also increase US dependency

on Middle East oil, which contradicts US energy security strategy “to replace more than 75 per cent of our oil imports from the Middle East by 2025.”⁴³

As recently as November 2012, the Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) threatened to stop services and strike unless the Nigerian Federal Government took positive measures to harden defenses in the oil region of the Nigerian Delta. They claimed that oil workers in the Delta region are being “kidnapped at will,” and point to increased instances of vandalism in the workplace which disrupted oil production.⁴⁴ Nigerian authorities also expressed safety concerns in the trucking of petroleum products. In fact, the International Energy Agency (IEA) supported this argument in November 2012, citing findings of oil theft costing the Nigerian Federal Government approximately \$7 billion in annual revenue per year (22.5 percent loss of total annual budget).⁴⁵ These vulnerabilities were further showcased in July 2012 when Italian multinational oil and gas company Eni S.p.A. had a pipeline sabotaged, which resulted in an oil spill. None of the above incidents directly involved Boko Haram, nevertheless, they illustrate the existent vulnerabilities in an area well within their current reach. It also demonstrates how the fear created from Boko Haram’s attacks in the north spread to the south. Since oil revenues account for 95 percent of Nigeria’s export earnings and 40 percent of government revenues, an attack would have devastating effects on their economy.⁴⁶ This oil revenue also pays for two-thirds of the annual ECOWAS budget.⁴⁷ Additionally, the regional and global dependency on Nigerian oil would force the United States and Africa to turn to the Middle East to gap-fill. The decreased supply and increased demand would raise prices.

The other major US strategic interest in Nigeria is its Armed Forces and political leadership. Nigeria is the regional hegemon in Africa. In addition to being members of ECOWAS and AU, Nigeria is also a member of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership

(TSCTP). This is a US-funded and implemented partnership designed to boost indigenous government capacity in the pan-Sahel region to fight terrorism. This partnership achieved significant victories in 2011 when “Mauritania and Mali defeated AQIM twice at Ouagadou Forest, and Mauritania defeated AQIM at Bessiknou.”⁴⁸ Nigeria is also one of the thirty founding members (29 countries plus the EU) of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). The goal of this US-led partnership is to identify urgent needs, devise solutions and mobilize resources in support of global counterterrorism efforts.⁴⁹ Since Nigeria is the most populous nation with a successful economy (second only to South Africa in the continent), they lead the African continent when it comes to counterterrorism efforts. As such, the United States must ensure they succeed to ensure its own safety. This includes the destruction of Boko Haram.

Nigerian Armed Forces engaged and are currently engaged in numerous missions throughout Africa. Their willingness to deploy abroad has significantly relieved the burden from the United States, NATO and the UN. A historical example of this occurred in August 2003 when they committed troops to Liberia to gap-fill until UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) arrived. In October 2004 Nigerian political and military forces deployed to Darfur, Sudan in an effort to curb the genocide.

With the March 2012 coup d'état and a deteriorating situation caused by the spread of Islamic extremism in Mali, Nigeria is planning on committing forces once again under the auspices of ECOWAS. Unlike past deployments like Sierra Leone where they committed over 10,000 soldiers, they are planning on deploying less than one battalion (estimated 700 soldiers). Nigeria's commitment to Mali is currently being met with increased domestic criticism. With instability in northern Nigeria and concerns about the Delta region, some citizens believe they need to keep their forces at home to protect against the domestic terrorism threat. Other skeptics

believe that even if Nigeria commits forces to Mali, they will not be able to affect positive change because of their brutal tactics as they proved domestically with Boko Haram. There are also governmental fears of Islamic militants in Mali linking up with Boko Haram as a result of Nigeria's involvement, or illegal arms shipments from Mali finding their way to Boko Haram.⁵⁰ If Boko Haram could be controlled or destroyed, Nigeria could fully commit itself to Mali and affect greater change. This would reduce pressure on the western world to get involved in African internal affairs.

CONCLUSION

Boko Haram may be considered a "loosely constructed" organization with local aims, but all of Africa and the United States feel indirect effects from their attacks.⁵¹ Significantly greater risk is involved if AQIM or Al Shabaab decide to bring them under their umbrella. If this occurs, US strategic interests may be directly targeted at home or abroad. Focusing counterterrorism efforts on key leadership is a positive step forward that is likely to yield solid results while not impacting the much needed humanitarian assistance in northern Nigeria. The United States must also work with Nigerian law enforcement, political and military leadership on a long term counterterrorism strategy. Concentrating solely on the kinetic application of military, police and JTF will likely yield marginal results as illustrated in the past. These agencies must gain the trust of northern Nigerian citizens and offer them incentives for information. Nigeria is the CoG for Africa in terms of energy and Armed Forces intervention, and must not fail. If they fail, the United States, NATO and the UN will bear a huge burden in terms of fiscal commitment as well as force deployment.

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